

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 5

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of James Foster Neal of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of James Foster Neal; and

WHEREAS, Jim Neal was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, an acclaimed attorney considered by many to be the greatest trial lawyer of his era, Jim Neal was renown as an extraordinary litigator, a distinguished legal scholar and a legendary prosecutor, having served as the chief trial lawyer in a number of the most prominent trials held during the last fifty years; and

WHEREAS, a native Tennessean who hailed from beautiful Sumner County, James Foster Neal was one of four children born to Robert Gus Neal and Emma Clendenning Neal and grew up in the Oak Grove community; and

WHEREAS, an outstanding athlete and fiery competitor on the gridiron, Jim Neal attended the University of Wyoming on a football scholarship and upon graduation he entered the United States Marine Corps in 1952; and

WHEREAS, proud to serve his country, Jim Neal saw active duty with the Marine Corps until December 31, 1954, achieving the rank of Captain; immediately upon leaving active duty he joined the United States Marine Corps Reserve where he served from 1955 until December 31, 1962; and

WHEREAS, pursuing a legal career after completing his military service, Mr. Neal enrolled at Vanderbilt University School of Law where he was Editor-in-Chief of the Vanderbilt

University Law Review and three years later received the prestigious Founders Medal as the top graduate of his class; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Neal's graduating class, the Vanderbilt University School of Law Class of 1957, was later described by a journalist as possibly "the most impressive and influential group the University ever sent packing into the real world" as it included a number of distinguished lawyers, including George Barrett, John Jay Hooker, Judge Thomas A. Higgins, Bill Henry, and Alfred E. Abbey; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Jim Neal received his Master's degree from Georgetown University School of Law in Washington, D.C. and later accepted a position with the federal government, serving as Special Assistant to United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy from 1961 to 1964; and

WHEREAS, exhibiting the legal talents that would garner him international acclaim, Jim Neal achieved national recognition in the early 1960s as he successfully prosecuted Teamster Union president James Hoffa for jury tampering in a highly publicized trial held in Chattanooga, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, returning to Nashville, Mr. Neal was named the United States Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee in 1964 and would remain in that capacity until 1966 when he entered private practice and also returned to Vanderbilt University School of Law to serve as a lecturer; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, Mr. Neal co-founded the law firm of Neal & Harwell with Aubrey B. Harwell in Nashville. He returned to Washington to serve as the Chief Trial Counsel of the Watergate Special Prosecution Force in 1973 and 1974, having initially been appointed to that position by Watergate special prosecutor Archibald Cox; and

WHEREAS, a milestone in the history of the United States of America, the trials resulting from the Watergate conspiracy were showcases for Mr. Neal's renown pre-trial preparation and personal tenacity as he won convictions of top White House aides H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and former U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell; and

WHEREAS, a gentleman of integrity and zeal when defending his client, Mr. Neal's talents in the courtroom brought success and recognition to the Neal & Harwell law firm as he defended clients in a number of high-profile cases, including John Landis in the "Twilight Zone"

case, Exxon Shipping Company in the Exxon Valdez oil spill, the Ford Motor Company in the Pinto criminal trial, Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards, and Elvis Presley's physician, Dr. George Nichopoulos; and

WHEREAS, acknowledged as one of the top litigators in the United States for more than four decades, Jim Neal's wisdom and legal acumen not only resulted in victory in the court room for his clients but the deep respect and high regard of his skills by his adversaries as well as his colleagues and numerous judges throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, a proud member of the American Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association and the Nashville Bar Association, Mr. Neal was inducted into the American Board of Trial Advocates, the American College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Trial Lawyers; and

WHEREAS, an active member of his community, Mr. Neal was a long time member of the Board of Ingram Industries, Inc., a former Vice Chair of the Nashville Chapter of the Urban League, a former Executive Committee Member of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, and a former Vice Chair of the Nashville Human Relations Commission; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Jim Neal received the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, the Distinguished American Award from the National Football Foundation & Hall of Fame, and the Johnny Cash Americanism Award from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; and

WHEREAS, awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree and the Distinguished Alumni Award by the University of Wyoming, Mr. Neal was also honored by Vanderbilt University School of Law; and

WHEREAS, devoted to his family, Mr. Neal is survived by his beloved wife and best friend, Dianne; their daughter and son-in-law, Sarah and Christopher Nickoloff, and grandchildren, Jackson and Ellie Nickoloff; his son, James F. Neal, Jr. (Lauren), and grandson James F. Neal, III (Jed), and his daughter, Julie Neal, and grandchildren Jaime and Anne; and

WHEREAS, Jim Neal leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional attorney, great Tennessean, public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of James Foster Neal, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Neal.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.